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ABSTRACT

The leadership of communities of color should reexamine vocational-technical education as a potentially effective channel for training Black and Latino youth. None of the five potential schooling channels--public schools, vocational schools and programs, employment training programs, apprenticeship and union programs, and prisons--has done an adequate job with regard to Black and Latino youth. Four important caveats must be considered: (1) Blacks have had a long history and tradition of participation in vocational education; (2) the Booker T. Washington-W. E. B. DuBois debate regarding how Blacks should be educated is full of myth and misconception; (3) any strategy built exclusively on one of the five schooling channels is doomed to ineffectiveness; and (4) focusing on improving the quality and availability of vocational-technical education is a "supply-side" strategy. Vocational-technical education should be reconsidered because adequate training and schooling are necessary to partake of available economic and job opportunities. In addition, the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act of 1990 directs more federal funds to school districts and colleges in low income communities. Although studies have shown the continuing problems faced by Blacks and Latinos in vocational-technical education, several surveys and studies conducted at the national level have identified essential factors for the development and implementation of effective, high quality schools and programs. (Contains 37 endnotes.) (YLB)

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RECONSIDERING VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL EDUCATION FOR BLACK AND LATINO YOUTH

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to propose that vocational technical education should be re-examined by the leadership of communities of color as a potentially effective channel for training youth. While there are many dangerous pitfalls in a generalized strategy to increase the level of black and Latino participation in vocational technical education as a guarantee of social and economic mobility, there are now some important advantages to this strategy that should be considered. Clearly, however, such advantages are associated only with those vocational technical education programs and systems that reflect quality, effectiveness in introducing students to decent wage jobs, access and diversity, and accountability to parents and community institutions.

The basis for proposing that vocational technical education should be reconsidered as a potentially effective channel for linking black and Latino youth to decent wages and stable jobs in the labor market is the result of several local studies sponsored by the William Monroe Trotter Institute on this topic over the last few years. These studies include *Vocational Education in Massachusetts and the Future of Young Minority Citizens* by James Jennings and William Joseph Moore (1988); *Vocational Education in Boston: Towards Accountability, Prioritization, and Decentralization* by James Jennings and William Joseph Moore (1990); and *An Examination of Latino Experiences in Vocational Education: Implications for Educational Policy and Reform in Massachusetts* by James Jennings (1992). I would also point to my article, "Minorities and Vocational Education: The Challenges," appearing in the *Vocational Education Journal* (April 1991).

Introduction

The current social and economic national context requires a re-examination of vocational technical education as an important schooling channel for blacks and Latinos. Broad changes in the U.S. economy and in the nation's demography require re-examining how young people of color, particularly blacks and Latinos, are being trained and educated for the labor market, and concomitantly, an understanding of continuing barriers to acquisition of stable jobs that pay decent wages.

Despite hundreds of reports, articles, and books, I believe that the nation's broad economic and demographic changes can be generally summarized as follows:

1) The U.S. economy has lost much of its productive capacity and competitiveness relative to other industrialized nations.[1]

2) The demographic profile of the nation is changing rapidly and drastically as a result of population growth rates for groups of color and immigration from Asia and Latin America.[2]

3) Economic dislocation and poverty seem to be developing into a permanent, or at least a persistent, feature of a relatively large sector of young people in black and Latino communities.[3]

These three major developments show that the nation is entering a new period of social, economic, and demographic transformations. This emerging context points to the need of educating and training new workers and young people effectively. We need to examine vocational technical education as one potentially effective way of preparing blacks and Latinos for the labor market.

New Context for Reconsidering Vocational Technical Education

The nation's demographic transformation is witnessed in the rapid growth of communities of color in cities across the country. As Latinos, blacks, and Asian-descent people continue to grow in numbers, the economy must be able to provide opportunities for social mobility to these groups. But even if economic growth at significant levels is a valid assumption, serious problems will still exist if these groups do not have the necessary education and training to respond to the economic needs of their communities and the country.

The educational and employment status of young blacks and Latinos in many of the larger American cities suggests that a significant number of individuals in these groups are not being equipped in terms of schooling to realize meaningful socio-economic mobility as they grow older. Many social scientists, educators, and demographers have discussed the potential social and economic—and perhaps even political—crisis this situation presents for all Americans. As pointed out in a report of the Hispanic Policy Development Project a few years ago:

> The health and stability of a pluralistic society is based on the promise of inclusion, not exclusion. As this nation goes about the business of reordering its priorities and adjusting to shifting economic realities in both domestic and international arenas, it cannot be unmindful that maintaining large numbers of Americans as a permanent class of working poor represents a grave danger to national cohesion and confidence.[4]

The fact that many members of the various Latino groups and blacks in the United States have a limited English proficiency or basic literacy makes the warning by the Hispanic Policy Development Project even more dire in the current period.[5]

Due to continuing high poverty levels and population growth among blacks and Latinos it is especially critical for the social and economic well-being of the nation that we provide quality education to these groups. An increasing number of public policy analysts, civic leaders, and governmental officials are now insisting that effective strategies for economic development must reflect "genuine linkages between social deficiencies (poor education, family instability, poverty) and deficiencies in economic competitiveness."[6] Thus, providing and guaranteeing educational opportunity for citizens of color can be one key tool for national economic development.

This topic is significant not just for young blacks and Latinos, but for the entire citizenry. As mentioned earlier, social and economic developments are unfolding at the national level; these developments will have great and lasting impact on the quality of life in this society. Some of these developments include: major changes in the country's demography and work force composition; sweeping shifts in the larger employment sectors of the nation; regional, national, and international movement of capital; continual loss of economic competitiveness on the part of the United States; and changing education and training needs necessary for the workforce to achieve a higher level of productivity within a context of rapidly evolving technology.

All of these developments are directly or indirectly related to the type and quality of education received by traditionally disadvantaged groups. Blacks and Latinos, especially youth, must be trained in ways that will allow them to be productive, rather than costly to society. Vocational technical education is a primary tool for providing such kinds of training and education. The information and conclusions offered in this paper give some

indication of the issues that we should raise and resolve in order to encourage greater participation of blacks and Latinos in vocational technical education.

The educational status of blacks and Latinos in and out of the public schools has led many to begin looking at vocational technical education as a way to improve educational opportunities. Vocational technical education may be a potential tool for equipping Latino and black youth with the training and skills needed to acquire jobs associated with relatively high and stable wages. Despite the precipitous downturn and fluctuations in the economy of the nation, there will still be a need for an increasing number of workers with appropriate training and skills to work in the construction, health, and manufacturing sectors.

There is another important reason for examining the status of young blacks and Latinos in vocational education in the nation at this time. There are new federal regulations requiring states to examine vocational education as it impacts "special populations." The Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act of 1990 was signed into law on September 28, 1990. This Act calls for an expansion of efforts to reach "special populations including the poor, the handicapped, economically disadvantaged, disabled, single parents, foster children, women and the limited English proficient" populations.[7] As reported by the Center for Law and Education in Washington D.C., states are now required to assess and then develop plans to address the "capability and responsiveness of programs to meet the needs of special populations for access to, and services in, vocational education, including students who are: disabled,

limited English-proficient, in programs designed to eliminate sex bias, or in correctional institutions."[8]

Five Channels for Education and Training

There are five potential channels available for acquiring the necessary level of education and skills in order to obtain employment. These channels are public schools, vocational education schools and programs, employment training programs, apprenticeship and union programs, and also, prisons. It is clear to many observers that none of these schooling channels have done an adequate job in providing the mass of poor and working-class black and Latino youth with the education, training, and orientation necessary to realize social and economic mobility. The evidence for this failure is the continuing high levels of unemployment and poverty for relatively large numbers of individuals in these communities.

Due to many factors, public schools too often have dampened the motivation for learning, educational aspiration, and achievement of students in the poorest parts of black and Latino communities. In many places, these institutions are still managed with backward and harmful practices such as tracking, retention, and classroom segregation that, in effect, discourage black and Latino youth from finishing school, or thinking about continuing their education after high school graduation.

Employment training programs have not been widely effective in equipping out-of-school youth with the skills that are necessary in order to participate fully and effectively in the labor market. Although some individuals have benefited by participating in

employment training programs, many other clients have simply experienced the "revolving door" syndrome, going from one training program to another without ever being able to use their training to significantly change their social and economic status.

Many times, as pointed out in a report of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies in Washington D.C., the most needy of potential clients are not reached or served:

> The current structure of the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) discourages providers from serving the most needy; the training periods are too short; and most of the JTPA programs do not provide the range of basic educational and job-specific skills that the most disadvantaged (including youth) require if they are to obtain decent jobs.[9]

In addition, employment training programs targeted towards recipients of public assistance have not made a significant dent in equipping clients with the skills, information, and contacts to enable them to gain stable jobs as well as economic comfort and security. According to a study by the National Puerto Rican Coalition, Inc., provisions for employment and training under the Family Support Act of 1988 have been faced with too many administrative and bureaucratic obstacles to produce effective results.[10]

While apprenticeship programs in other nations have been lauded as models to be followed in the United States, the fact of the matter is that this approach is quite limited in the U.S.[11] It will be a long time before enough apprenticeship programs can even be put into place to help black and Latino youth in economically depressed communities.

Furthermore, a few studies are now beginning to suggest that apprenticeship programs may not necessarily be as ideal or as effective as some media accounts have suggested.[12]

It cannot be claimed that as it is currently structured, vocational education (or "vocational technical education" as it is now referred to in federal legislation) is anymore effective than public schools, apprenticeship programs, or employment and training programs for black and Latino youth. Problems associated with tracking, segregation, lack of quality programs and adequate resources, etc., also plague the vocational educational channel. However, recent social and economic pressures as well as changes in the federal legislation governing vocational technical education may provide opportunities to make this schooling channel more effective than in the past, and perhaps even more effective than the other channels in training and preparing some black and Latino youth for decent living-wage jobs in the labor market.

The channel of vocational technical education has been overlooked by many educational leaders and activists in the national movement of education reform. For example, a recent report stated:

> Despite the recent concern about education's failure to prepare the nation's workforce, advocates and school reformers alike have generally overlooked vocational education—the wing of the school specifically devoted to education for work. The little advocacy that has been done focused mostly on improving access, without asking whether this merely meant better access to second-class academics, quickly outmoded skills, and work on the bottom rungs of the economy.[13]

Even among black and Latino educators the potential of vocational education has been overlooked, or de-emphasized. Vocational education, for instance, was not even mentioned once in the report issued by a group of black scholars and educators

organized as The Committee on Policy for Racial Justice. Their report, "Visions of a Better Way: A Black Appraisal of Public Schooling," overlooked the fact that a great number and proportion of black students in the nation are found in vocational education schools and programs.[14]

While other studies have not completely overlooked the possibility of vocational technical education as an effective preparation for the labor market, this channel is still not treated seriously. An example of this is the report, "Ohio's African-American Males: A Call to Action." While this report did cite vocational education as an area of concern in the education of young African-American males, it made no substantive recommendations regarding how this channel might be better utilized by the black community. In addition, the report devoted the overwhelming mass of information and recommendations on the experiences of young black males in academic programs.[15]

This inattention to the experiences and future of blacks and Latinos in vocational technical education is not justified given that vocational education represents a major channel of schooling in America. The yearly public expenditure for vocational education in 1990 was about 6.5 billion dollars for 5.5 million high school students.[16] Furthermore, there are more black and Latino students enrolled nationally in vocational education programs than in academic programs. The Center for Educational Statistics reported that 51.5% of all Latino high school students were enrolled in vocational education in 1987, while 30.5% of all Latino high school students were found in academic programs, and the remainder were in programs of general study. More than half (51%) of all black high school students in 1987 were enrolled in vocational education programs, while 34%

were enrolled in academic programs. Only 37% of all white high school students were enrolled in vocational education, and 45.1% were found in academic programs in 1987.[17]

Vocational education and apprenticeship programs, however, are beginning to attract greater attention. There are three reasons for this change among some educators. In discussing apprenticeship programs in particular, Roditi explains these reasons:

> First, it is presented as a way to redress the inequity of an educational system that neglects the three-quarters of young people who don't go on to complete a bachelor's degree. Second, newly popular themes of learning suggest that students learn better 'in context'—in real-life situations that require thinking and problem solving. Third, there is widening agreement that this country stands to lose its higher-wage jobs unless its 'front line' workers have the level of skill and adaptability of workers in industrial nations like Germany and Japan.[18]

This explanation is also valid regarding the growing interest in vocational education.

Four Caveats

There are four important caveats that must be included in the proposition that vocational technical education should be reconsidered by black and Latino leadership and by their communities and constituents. The first caveat is a reminder that blacks have had a long history and tradition of participation in American vocational education. This can easily be forgotten or overlooked when one notices the relatively low number and proportion of black teachers in vocational education.[19] The general absence of black teachers and administrators in many vocational technical education programs and schools

is inconsistent with the history of blacks in the area of education for work. Since slavery, blacks have been integrally involved with vocational education.[20]

Between 1619 and the 1840s in some parts of the nation, for example, blacks were forced to participate in a broad range of apprenticeship programs specifically designed for slaves. Manual labor schools for blacks began to open in many parts of the South by the 1830s. After the Civil War several institutions, such as Hampton and Tuskegee, were founded to train blacks for certain kinds of work. Frederick Douglass spoke strongly in favor of expanding black participation in vocational and industrial training throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century. By the 1880s, manual training courses for blacks were found even in private liberal arts colleges and universities. From 1910 to the 1930s public secondary schools also began to offer manual training courses for blacks. By the 1930s the federal government actively supported the provision of certain kinds of trade and industrial education in black institutions of higher education.

The second caveat I would add to this discussion is that the so-called debate between Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois regarding how blacks should be educated is full of myth and misconception. Du Bois, according to this popular myth, has been projected as a proponent of classical and liberal education, and Washington as an advocate of vocational education. Presumably, these black leaders were in opposition regarding these two points of view; however, this is not completely accurate. Du Bois was not against vocational education; in fact, the 1905 Declaration of Principles of the Niagara Movement, an organization in which Du Bois played a leading role, endorsed the concept of vocational education for blacks.[21] This document represented the

philosophical basis for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) which Du Bois helped to establish in 1909. Du Bois understood clearly that vocational education was an important channel for black schooling, but he insisted that blacks should not use this channel to exclude other schooling such as those programs offered by the study of the classics and liberal arts.[22] Du Bois and many other black educators did not see a contradiction between vocational education and the liberal arts. Furthermore, Du Bois pointed out that even the presence of black students in vocational education schools would still require highly trained black teachers in order to teach the appropriate skills and latest technology. He insisted that black students in vocational education receive the same quality of training that white students were receiving in their separate vocational education schools.

I would propose, as a matter of fact, that the debate was not about vocational education *versus* liberal education; on the contrary, it focused on how to ensure that vocational education would be of the highest quality and not be utilized as an excuse to close other kinds of schooling channels to the black community. Washington did not actually advocate vocational education, but rather *manual training*. The purpose of the latter was not preparation for an occupation, but rather simply to instill a work ethic in future black teachers. As a matter of fact, Anderson cites several primary sources indicating many criticisms by students of Tuskegee on the grounds that they were not receiving vocational education.

This leads to the third caveat for reconsidering vocational education for black and Latino youth. That is, any strategy built exclusively on one of the five schooling channels

that I cited earlier is doomed to ineffectiveness. It is defeating to advocate that blacks and Latinos should be educated or trained in one particular way. We must insist that the broad range of educational services possible in our society be as available in communities of color as they are in other communities. At the same time that we continue to encourage our youth toward quality vocational education, we should also provide opportunities for these same youth to participate in college-level courses of study.

The last caveat is to realize that focusing on improving the quality and availability of vocational technical education for black and Latino youth is a "supply-side" or "human capital" strategy. Economic development and growth, however, requires both "supply-side" and "demand-side" approaches. The former emphasizes the preparation of workers to take up various kinds of jobs in the U.S. economy. The kind of education that one receives, schooling level, and information about education and employment opportunities are important factors to consider in improving the potential worker's chances for a decent-paying job.

Whether or not such jobs are available in ample supply for all who become qualified through training requires attention to the nature and size of the economy and how its structural basis is changing. A recent report indicated, for instance, that between 1988 and 1991 the Boston metropolitan area lost 172,900 jobs or 10% of its employment in retail trade, services, manufacturing, and construction.[23] This scenario has been repeated in many central cities of the nation during the 1970s and 1980s.[24] How a locality should plan for economic growth and development cannot solely depend on the supply-side of the economic growth equation. It must also understand and try to control the forces that

produce jobs and job losses. These are demand-side considerations. The potential of vocational education will not be realized if education reform and policy do not consider how the economy and the factors that fuel it are changing and being impacted by broad social forces such as demography, technology, and global developments. It cannot be argued convincingly that schooling by itself, regardless of which particular channel we use, can be a remedy for these broad developments.

A serious flaw in how some educators have pushed the human capital approach as a way of enhancing the market potential of black and Latino youth is the presumption that the economy is forever healthy and expanding. Under this assumption, the structure of the labor market, how it is affected by global developments, and the kinds of jobs and wages that are produced in the labor market are not examined in the rush to get people educated and trained for jobs. There sometimes is reflected a strong, yet unfounded belief, that if only more blacks and Latinos in poor neighborhoods could obtain the right skills and training, the problem of unemployment in these communities would be resolved. Although this human capital response to black and Latino youth unemployment is better than the notions that these youth simply do not want to work or do not want to work hard enough, it is still inadequate because it ignores the *demand*-side of the problem.

Interestingly, the role of education in guaranteeing certain kinds of employment is now evident because of major structural changes on the demand-side of the labor market. In other words, it is the demand-side factors that ultimately determine the level of importance of the particular quantity and quality of skills and training that workers

need in order to be employed productively. A few generations ago, for example, one could be a high school dropout and not worry about employment security. There were many jobs available that were open to whites, regardless of their educational level. And these jobs, as low in status as they may have been, still provided decent living wages during earlier periods. The point here is that it has been the demand-side of the labor market that has generated the need for certain levels and quality of schooling. This is sometimes overlooked when we discuss the need to improve the education of black and Latino youth in American cities in isolation of what is occurring on the demand-side part of the economy.

It should be noted that the actual connection between more education and training for blacks, in particular, and the ability to acquire better and higher-paying jobs has been tenuous in American history. Two studies published about twenty years ago are still relevant today in making this point. In *Education and Jobs: The Great Training Robbery* (1971), Ivar Berg did not find a strong relationship between national dollars spent on education and training and the acquisition of greatly enhanced marketability on the part of clients.[25] Stephen Thermstrom's study of social mobility in Boston, *The Other Bostonians* (1973), found that despite significantly lower schooling levels Italian and Irish workers continually had greater access to the labor market and higher-paying jobs in the 1950s than blacks.[26] The point I wish to make is that the relationship between more schooling for blacks and Latinos *and* the kinds of jobs that these groups will be able to obtain in the labor market is not necessarily straightforward; this relationship is impacted by other factors connected with the demand-side of the equation for economic mobility.

I am also suggesting that the demand-side of the equation has changed dramatically in the last few years. These issues along with the other caveats that I discussed briefly must be considered in examining how to utilize vocational technical education for the social and economic well-being of black and Latino youth.

Why Vocational Technical Education?

Despite these caveats, however, adequate training and schooling is indeed necessary to position people and communities to partake of the economic and job opportunities that are now available or will become available. The fact of the matter is that the chances for people of color to acquire higher-paying jobs does increase with higher levels of training and education. The lack of education, skills, and training has been an important impediment to blacks and Latinos in achieving higher levels of employment and wages.

The demand-side of the labor market is changing in ways that indicate that more and more of the higher-paying jobs require training beyond a high school diploma. For example, the following jobs are among the most rapidly growing occupations that require less than a bachelor's degree but are not available to job seekers without schooling beyond a high school diploma:

paralegal
radiologic technician/technologist
medical assistant, physical therapy aide
data processing equipment repairer
medical records technician
surgical technician
restaurant cook

respiratory therapist
licensed practical nurse
maintenance repairer
teacher's aide
registered nurse
legal secretary
medical secretary[27]

Many of the fastest growing occupations between 1986 and 2000 will require quality training in vocational technical education: dental assistants (64,000 new jobs), radiologic technologists and technicians (75,000), medical assistants (64,000), data processing equipment repairers (56,000), dental hygienists (54,000), and physical therapists (53,000).[28]

Acquiring more education for these occupations should translate into higher wages for blacks and Latinos. Unfortunately, this is not necessarily the case. The wage gap between whites and people of color with similar schooling is not eliminated through vocational technical education. Furthermore, whites at education completion levels comparable to those of blacks and Latinos usually have lower unemployment rates than blacks and Latinos.[29]

It is important to note, however, that vocational technical education may enhance the job marketability of some individuals to a greater extent than others with a college degree. In relation to this point, two researchers have pointed out that there has been a statistical overstating of the number of job openings in the professional and technical occupations. Mischel and Teixeira (1991) assert that "overstating the anticipated growth of professional and technical jobs also leads to an overemphasis on college education. Even an optimistic view suggests that at most 30 percent of future workers will need a

college degree, up from about 25 percent in the mid-1980s. If anything, there may be a glut of college graduates."[30]

The Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act of 1990

Another reason that vocational technical education should be reconsidered as an effective schooling channel for blacks and Latinos is the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act of 1990. Partially due to the growing acknowledgment that workers must be better trained in the United States, the national government reauthorized and passed the Perkins Act in September 1990 with provisions that according to the Center for Law and Education have "the potential to radically change the direction and content of vocational education for millions of students. . . A new formula directs much more of the federal funds to school districts and colleges in low-income communities. The Act has strong new requirements for program quality, equity, and parent, student, and community involvement."[31]

The provisions of the 1990 Perkins Act alluded to above include:

- integrating vocational and academic education such that teaching of a specialized skill must be accompanied with instruction in the liberal arts;
- involving and preparing students with all aspects of an industry (rather than one specific job) including an introduction to "planning, management, finance, technical and production skills, underlying principles of technology, labor, community, and health, safety, and environment";[32]
- requiring states to submit plans detailing how these new objectives will be addressed and implemented; and

- guaranteeing access into vocational technical education for low-income individuals, low-achieving individuals, individuals with disabilities, individuals with limited English proficiency, individuals in programs designed to eliminate sex bias, and individuals in correctional institutions.

The new Perkins Act also mandates that these targeted groups receive a broad range of supportive services including:

- equal access to a full range of vocational education programs . . . and to recruitment, enrollment, and placement activities;
- protection against discrimination;
- affirmative outreach and recruitment efforts, and specific program information in a language and form that the students and their parents can understand;
- programs of good quality in the most integrated setting possible;
- supplementary service they need to succeed in those programs, based upon assessments of their individual needs; and,
- guidance, counseling, career development, and transition services, conducted by trained staff.[33]

These provisions, if enforced, could open the doors to quality schooling in the area of vocational technical education for blacks and Latinos resulting in better preparation for higher-paying jobs in the labor market. It is clear, however, that this federal legislation alone will not guarantee that blacks and Latinos will receive the services that the law now mandates.

This belief is suggested in a recent report analyzing the Perkins Act of 1990. This report by Coyle-Williams (1991) shows that even with the innovative policy contained in the Perkins Act, "ambiguities and loopholes in the language of the law may actually cause

a relaxing of efforts to serve special populations"; and furthermore, "to date, the U. S. Department of Education has found most states' three-year vocational education plans unacceptable. The Department has pointed to a widespread failure to specify how the needs of special populations will be met."[34]

Continuing Problems Faced by Blacks and Latinos in Vocational Technical Education

Black and Latino students participating in vocational technical education continue to face a broad range of problems. These problems will continue to exist despite the provisions of the reauthorized Perkins Act. Some of the problems facing black and Latino students that were uncovered in a series of reports and investigations by the author and focus on vocational education in Massachusetts may be evident in other parts of the country. These problems included the following:

- segregated learning environments;
- tracking black and Latino students into certain career paths;
- utilization of outdated curriculum information and technology;
- isolation of vocational education programs from academic programs and institutions;
- lack of black and Latino vocational education teachers and administrators;
- teachers' low expectations of black and Latino students;
- lack of strong linkage with black and Latino community-based organizations;
- lack of prioritization of vocational technical education vis-a-vis academic programs;

- weak and inconsistent relationships with unions;
- non-priority of support and expansion of bilingual education;
- lack of parental participation and input in vocational education;
- inadequate programmatic information and data about the participation of black and Latino students on a system-wide basis; and,
- very low numbers of black and Latino students in vocational technical education programs at the secondary schooling level who pursue postsecondary vocational technical education programs.[35]

The above problems will continue to undermine the schooling effectiveness of blacks and Latinos in vocational technical education because the setting of national policy is simply not an adequate solution to these kinds of problems. Unless certain weaknesses are corrected through POLICY, PARTICIPATION, and POLITICS, vocational technical education can easily become what it has been for many students of color—a dead-end track of inferior schooling. The new Perkins Act addresses through national policy some of the problems faced by blacks and Latinos in vocational technical education. But black and Latino communities and parents must also assist in enforcing these new Perkins Act provisions through greater participation and political involvement in the affairs of vocational technical education at the local and state levels.

Making Vocational Technical Education Accountable to the Well-Being of Black and Latino Youth

Several surveys and studies conducted at the national level over the last several years have allowed policymakers and practitioners in vocational technical education to identify the essential factors for the development and implementation of effective, quality schools

and programs. Black and Latino parents as well as community leaders minimally should focus on what the literature has identified as critical components for quality vocational technical education. These components must be in place if black and Latino youth are to be served effectively by this schooling channel.

The National Center for Research in Vocational Education has described some of the "Preliminary Components for Exemplary Vocational Education Programs." These components include:

strong administrative leadership
sufficient financial support
staff development
continual program evaluation
individualized curriculum modifications
integration of academic and vocational curricula
appropriate instructional settings
cooperative learning experiences
accurate assessments of individual's interests
instructional support services
on-going career guidance and counseling
family, parent, and community involvement and support
work experience opportunities
job placement services
follow-up and studies of graduates and non-graduates[36]

I propose that these are only *preliminary* components that blacks and Latinos in the education community should ensure are built into systems of vocational technical education. In addition, by themselves these components are not adequate for ensuring that vocational technical education will effectively prepare youth for higher-paying jobs in the labor market.

Several other studies point to additional criteria that should guide educators and activists in determining whether or not a vocational technical education system is effective for poor and working-class youth in black and Latino communities. Roditi proposes, for instance, that the teaching of creative thinking skills is an important tool for preparing young people for the changing job market.[37] It should not be assumed that the teaching of creative thinking skills is something that can take place only in academic programs. Many of the best vocational technical education programs and schools have been built upon the importance of imparting creative thinking skills to their students at the same time that they are trained for a job or occupation.

Black and Latino parents, along with civic and community-based leaders, should also insist in having a strong voice in determining the direction and organization of vocational technical education. In too many instances, the vocational education schools and programs have not received the attention that is justified simply by the fact that many black and Latino youth are found in these schools.

A first step in this direction is the collection and analysis of information and data about the participation rates of black and Latino youth in systems of vocational technical education. Parents should also hold their own meetings to discuss common concerns they may have about a particular vocational education school, program, administrator, or teacher. Forums to provide parents and community groups with information about how to understand and become involved with vocational technical education should be organized throughout black and Latino neighborhoods. Parents and community-based organizations should raise for public discussion the ways in which individuals become

vocational technical education teachers in the schools and programs in their cities and states. This kind of information should be made widely available.

Finally, parents of black and Latino youth, as well as representatives of community-based institutions, must ensure that teachers and administrators understand the ramifications of our rapidly changing national demography. This means, in part, that vocational technical education faculty and administrators educating our children be made aware of the importance of understanding an accurate history of the struggles for social equality and educational excellence that have characterized black and Latino communities. Leadership, excellence, and public service are qualities that are reflected in such struggles. Vocational technical education can be an important means to developing these kinds of qualities in the lives of black and Latino youth. But like everything else in American education, this will not occur unless communities of color demand it and organize to obtain it.

Endnotes

1. For a brief summary of broad U.S. economic developments see Kevin Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor* (New York: Random House, 1990), 130.

2. For example, between 1980 and 1990 the white population of the entire country grew by 6%, but the population growth rates for blacks, Latinos, and Asians was 13%, 53%, and 103% respectively. This demographic revolution becomes more pronounced when immigration into the United States is considered; between 1970 and 1975 net immigration explained 16% of the nation's total population growth, but by the 1980 to 1985 period net immigration accounted for 23% of the total population growth; see Leon F. Bouvier and Robert W. Gardner, *Immigration to the U.S.: The Unfinished Story* (Washington, DC: Population Reference Bureau, Inc., November 1986) and William H. Frey, *Metropolitan America: Beyond the Transition* (Washington, DC: Population Reference Bureau, Inc., July 1990).

3. In 1988, 44.2% of all black children under 18 years of age lived in a poverty-stricken family; among Latino children the national figure for 1988 was 37.9%. See Suzanne M. Bianchi, *America's Children: Mixed Prospects* (Washington, DC: Population Reference Bureau, Inc., June 1990), 14.

4. *Closing the Gap For U.S. Hispanic Youth: Public/Private Strategies* (Washington, DC: The Hispanic Policy Development Project, 1988), v.

5. The Ohio Governor's Commission on Socially Disadvantaged Black Males reported that nationally in 1981 about 47% of urban black teens may have been functionally illiterate; see *Ohio's African-American Males: A Call to Action*, Report of the Governor's Commission on Socially Disadvantaged Black Males (Columbus: Ohio Office of Black Affairs, June 1990), Chapter 1. Also see *Students with Limited English Proficiency: Selected Resources for Vocational Preparation* (Berkeley: National Center for Research in Vocational Education/University of California at Berkeley, August 1990), Preface; and JoAnn Crandall *Directions in Vocational Education for Limited English Proficient Students and Adults* Occasional Paper #19 (Columbus: National Center for Research in Vocational Education/Ohio State University, 1985).

6. *Pioneers of Progress: Policy Entrepreneurs and Community Development* (Somerville, MA: Jobs For The Future, April 1991), 2.

7. Carolyn Maddy-Bernstein, "Legislative Update," *Technical Assistance For Special Populations Brief*/National Center for Research in Vocational Education, vol. 2, no. 2 (December 1990), 4.

8. *Alert: Your State's Vocational Education Plan* (Washington, DC: Center for Law and Education, April 1, 1991).

9. Margaret C. Simms, ed., *Black Economic Progress: An Agenda for the 1990s*, (Washington, DC: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, 1988), 8.

10. Jose E. Cruz, *Implementing the Family Support Act: Perspectives of Puerto Rican Clients* (Washington, DC: The National Puerto Rican Coalition, Inc., 1991).

11. See Tomas Toch, "Crafting The Work Force," *U.S. News & World Report*, 19 August 1991.

12. Hannah Roditi, "High Schools for Docile Workers," *The Nation*, 16 March 1992.

13. "Vocational Education: A New Opportunity for Educational and Community Changes," *Newsnotes* (Washington, DC: Center for Law and Education, December ~~1~~991), 1.

14. John Hope Franklin and Eleanor Holmes Norton, The Committee on Policy for Racial Justice, *Visions of a Better Way: A Black Appraisal of Public Schooling* (Washington, DC: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, 1988).

15. *Ohio's African-American Males: A Call to Action*, Report of the Governor's Commission on Socially Disadvantaged Black Males (Columbus: Ohio Office of Black Affairs, June 1990), Chapter 1.

16. Toch, "Crafting the Workforce."

17. J. Michael O'Malley, *Academic Growth of High School Age Hispanic Students in the U.S.* (Washington, DC: Center for Educational Statistics, March 1987), 73.

18. Roditi, "High Schools for Docile Workers."

19. It should be noted, furthermore, that the American Vocational Association continues to have an annually elected national board which is usually all-white, despite the growing importance of black and Latino students in vocational technical education.

20. See James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

21. Joanne Grant, *Black Protest Thought* (New York: Fawcette Premier, 1991), 206.

22. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, 33-78.

23. Charles Stein, "U.S. Points Gloomy Job-loss Picture for Boston—Down 94,000 in '91," *The Boston Globe*, 15 April 1992.

24. See William J. Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 40.

25. Ivar Berg, *Education and Jobs: The Great Training Robbery* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971).

26. Stephen Thermstrom, *The Other Bostonians* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973).

27. Kathy Leftwich, "Outlook: Where the Jobs Are" *Vocational Education Journal* (February 1992), 21.

28. Simms, *Black Economic Progress: An Agenda for the 1990s*, 50.

29. See U.S. Bureau of Labor Studies. 1985. *Handbook of Labor Statistics*, Bulletin 2217. Washington, DC, 169-171).

30. Lawrence Mischel and Ray A. Teixeira, "The Myth of the Coming Labor Shortage," *The American Prospect* (Fall 1991), 99.

31. "New Federal Law Brings Academics and Community Involvement to Vocational Education," *Newsnotes* (Washington, DC: Center for Law and Education, December 1991), 2.

32. ibid., 3.

33. ibid., 2.

34. Maureen Coyle-Williams, "The 1990 Perkins Amendments: No More 'Business As Usual,'" *Technical Assistance for Special Populations Brief*/National Center for Research in Vocational Education, vol. 3, no. 1 (September 1991), 3.

35. James Jennings and William Joseph Moore, *Vocational Technical Education in Boston: Towards Accountability, Prioritization, and Decentralization* (Boston: State Department of Education, 1990).

36. Carolyn Maddy-Bernstein, "National Recognition Program for Exemplary Vocational Education Programs Serving Special Needs Population," *Technical Assistance for Special Populations Brief*/National Center for Research in Vocational Education, vol. 1, no. 4 (December 1989), 3.

37. Roditi, "High Schools for Docile Workers."